

**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
COLORADO RIVER BASIN REGION
EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT
May 15, 2000**

Inland Surface Waters Policy (Phil Gruenberg)

On April 28, 2000, the State Office of Administrative Law approved the State Board's Policy for Implementation of Toxics Standards for Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays and Estuaries of California (hereafter "Policy"). The Policy becomes effective immediately and its goal is to standardize permitting procedures to control potentially toxic discharges of wastes for specific priority pollutants into non-ocean surface waters, like the Salton Sea and Alamo River. The specific pollutants and pollutant limitations are identified in what is known as the California Toxics Rule (CTR), also recently approved by USEPA. The Policy essentially requires that:

- 1) NPDES permits for facilities such as wastewater treatment plants discharging to inland surface waters must include effluent limits for specific toxic pollutants;
- 2) discharges of wastes from nonpoint sources, like agricultural return flows, that may contain specific pollutants in toxic amounts must also be controlled;
- 3) monitoring must be implemented for certain toxins;
- 4) other chronic toxicity provisions must be implemented; and
- 5) the controls/limits be enforced.

The Policy provides technical guidance for developing appropriate controls and resolving potential conflicts between Regional Board Basin Plan limits for surface waters and CTR limits. It can also be used as a tool to complement watershed management and the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) process.

Regional Board staff will update NPDES permits on a case-by-case basis and continue to implement a tiered-approach to control nonpoint sources to implement the Policy. Staff is scheduled to attend training for Policy implementation this summer (June-July) in Riverside and Sacramento.

City of El Centro Wastewater Treatment Facility (Phil Gruenberg)

During the past few months, El Centro's Wastewater Treatment Facility has discharged millions of gallons of undisinfected wastewater and raw sewage to tributaries of the Salton Sea. These discharges resulted from failure of the ultraviolet disinfection system and inadequate wastewater containment capacity. In response, the Executive Officer has issued an Administrative Civil Liability Complaint (ACLC) recommending payment of \$15,000. The City has indicated that it will not contest the ACLC and will waive a Regional Board hearing. The possibility of contributing the funds to a supplemental environmental project in lieu of payment to the Cleanup and Abatement Account is presently being discussed.

Whole Effluent Toxicity (John Carmona)

Whole Effluent Toxicity (WET) Test is the measurement of the combined toxic effect of effluent on aquatic life in receiving waters. WET test methodologies are described in 40 CFR part 136, "Guidelines for Establishing Test Procedures for the Analysis of Pollutants". The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed 2 types of WET test methods: acute (short term, 3 days) and chronic (long term, 7 days), to estimate the highest "safe" or "no effect" effluent concentrations. The Region 7 Water Quality Control Plan contains surface water quality objectives that require effluent discharges to be free of toxic substances at concentrations which are toxic to human, plant, animal, or indigenous aquatic life. As part of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) discharge order, the discharger is required to sample the effluent and conduct toxicity testing. Compliance with the Regional Board's toxicity objective is determined through the use of bioassay WET tests. Test organisms used in Region 7 include the fathead minnow and water flea.

Statewide toxicity issues include:

- Different toxicity objectives and associated implementation policies among the different Regional Boards
- Difficulty in the selection of appropriate test organisms
- Difficulty in determining permit compliance due to variability and reliability of test results
- Effluent quality temporal variability cannot be evaluated with periodic sampling events

Presently, Regional Board staff action regarding toxicity include the review and consideration of:

- Federal and State toxicity guidance
- Alternate test procedures proposed by dischargers for organisms indigenous to discharge receiving waters
- EPA's investigations of variability and reliability of WET methods

Salton Sea Restoration Efforts Enhanced Evaporation Systems Pilot/Demonstration Project (Liann Chavez)

As part of restoration efforts, the US Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and the Salton Sea Authority (SSA), acting as joint lead agencies, are proposing to conduct a pilot/demonstration study to evaluate the feasibility and efficacy of three Enhanced Evaporation System (EES) technologies to lower the salinity of the Salton Sea. To meet both California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements, the BOR and the SSA recently have transmitted two environmental documents: "Initial Study/Environmental Assessment Enhanced Evaporation Systems Pilot/Demonstration Project, Imperial County, California" and "Draft Negative Declaration Enhanced Evaporation Systems Pilot/Demonstration Project, Imperial County, California", both documents are dated April 18, 2000. Regional Board staff is reviewing these documents regarding water quality issues.

The pilot/demonstration study is expected to commence October 2000 and anticipated to last approximately two years. The proposed study site is the former Salton Sea Naval Test Base located along the southwestern shore of the Salton Sea. The objective of the pilot phase is to evaluate the performance and cost of three different EES technologies: Agam Energy Systems (tower system), Slimline Manufacturing (turbo misting system), and SMI Water Treatment (fan misting system). Depending on the results, one technology may be expanded into a demonstration phase (increasing operational scale by a factor of 3 to 5 times) to optimize system performance, determine appropriate configuration, and collect data to design a full-scale system. Upon receipt of a complete Report of Waste Discharge (WDRs) for the pilot/demonstration study, Regional Board staff will draft Waste Discharge Requirements for lined ponds to collect and contain generated brine waste. A full-scale operation, considered as a possible long-term solution to decrease the salinity of the Salton Sea, is projected to encompass over 8,000 acres and will require a new WDR.

Compliance with Cleanup and Abatement Order No. 98-103, Marriott's Desert Springs Resort, Palm Desert (Robert Perdue)

In February 1998, Marriott removed underground storage tanks, fuel dispensers, and associated piping from their maintenance area. The tanks were tight, however, the soils beneath the dispensers were saturated with gasoline, including MTBE. Ongoing investigation has shown high concentrations of petroleum in the one hundred foot thick vadose zone. MTBE has been detected in groundwater samples collected from one hundred feet deep within the aquifer beneath the site. Additional data is being collected to establish whether the MTBE detected in groundwater is an artifact of the remedial investigation or is a release from the vadose zone/groundwater interface. Soil vapor extraction has removed around 2,000 gallons of gasoline range hydrocarbons from the soils. Further investigation is ongoing.

A Coachella Valley Water District municipal supply well adjacent to this release has been removed from service. No MTBE or other petroleum constituents were detected in samples from the municipal well.